



Daily Report

Sub-Saharan Africa

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OAU Secretary General Discusses 31st Summit

*MM2107091995 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT
in Arabic 15 Jul 95 p7*

[Interview with OAU Secretary General Salim Ahmad Salim by Sayyid Ahmad Khalifah in Addis Ababa "days after the African Summit"]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Khalifah] The 31st African Summit conference which was held in the Ethiopian capital toward the end of last month adopted resolutions in respect of a large number of basic issues, such as the questions of debts, conflicts, and the OAU budget. How do you view the feasibility of the implementation of these recommendations and resolutions now that they have been "theoretically" adopted?

[Salim] The timing of the convocation of the 31st African Summit in Addis Ababa 26-28 June was based on two points: First, that the summit was convened in Addis Ababa for the first time since 1990—that is since President Meles Zenawi assumed power—and the summit was held at his invitation. Second, that the summit was held under changing international conditions which made it imperative for Africa to face up to an enormous number of challenges.

True, the African summit conference dealt with a number of the issues on its agenda some of which were not new such as the question of the debts and financial contributions to the OAU's operations while others were new such as the questions of African conflicts and economic integration among the countries of the African continent.

But to say that the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the summit were theoretical is not true in all cases. This is because we believe that the identification of problems constitutes, in itself, half of the solution, with the other half remaining to be completed. The most important factor in regard to the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations depends on the political will and the financial resources available.

This last African summit has shown that the African countries are fully committed to the OAU and believe in its new role and new responsibilities, represented in the resolving of conflicts and the completion of the building of the African economic grouping within the framework of joint African action and solidarity.

True, the resolutions about which you have talked do not provide ready-made solutions so much as providing directions and pointers to the means and ways we need to adopt for finding solutions which, though they might be difficult in some cases, are in the end not impossible.

Let us, for example, take the question of Burundi. The summit has decided to extend the OAU's presence in that country through its civilian and military team there until 17 December. Furthermore the African summit has entrusted its current chairman, President Meles Zenawi, and me personally in my capacity as the OAU secretary general, to work for the holding of a conference of all the parties to the political conflict in Burundi in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa as soon as possible.

We shall make the necessary contacts with the parties to the conflict in Burundi to ensure the holding of the aforementioned conference toward the end of next month. Let me ask you here: what is theoretical about all this?

The implementation of the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the OAU summit is the responsibility of us in the Secretariat General. As long as there is a movement toward the objectives governed by the resolutions taken, that will be what is required and what is possible.

The disparity of the systems of government in Africa which ranges from totalitarian to military, to pluralist, to democratic, and even to anarchic, as is the case in Somalia, Liberia, and Burundi, appears to be one reason for the African failure beginning with the economy through to politics and finally to military clashes and border conflicts.

Indeed, because of its conflicting political regimes, Africa appears at variance with the world as well or at least with many of the world countries which possess advantages and resources.

The question is: Is it not possible to find a common political denominator among all the African countries to be proposed and led by the OAU to ensure closeness among the African regimes and freedom and stability for the African peoples and their proximity to the movement now taking place in the world toward unity, democracy, and respect for human rights, even be it within the framework of an African political system that takes into consideration all aspects of the realities in Africa and does not imitate any other system?

The disparity among the regimes in Africa is not something new, and it is not confined to the African continent alone. The talk about a common political system denominator is likewise not new either. In their 1990 Addis Ababa Declaration the African leaders unanimously agreed to adopt the course of democracy through the changes that have begun to take place in the continent to safeguard human rights and ensure popular participation, and more importantly still, to face up to the changes taking place in the international arena

in order to check their negative aspects by adherence to collective action and the building of government structures guaranteeing the purity, transparency, and accountability of the regimes.

As to the question of democracy and pluralism, we support the style of democracy that is compatible with the environment and conditions in Africa. Perhaps the best proof of this can be seen in the fact that 10 years ago we used to see few African countries ruled by democratic pluralism but today we see few countries that are still governed by military regimes.

Thus the picture has changed dramatically. Furthermore, the OAU has witnessed democratic elections taking place in a number of African countries beginning with the Congo, Benin, Zambia, Mali, Niger, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Gabon, Tanzania, Cape Verde, Sao Tome, the Seychelles, and the Comoro Islands, and ending with Ethiopia and South Africa. The operation of change is constant and continuing.

[Khalifah] Africa has been suffering from colossal debts. What do you think Africa should do to find practical solutions for the problem of its debts so as to rely on itself?

[Salim] Africa's foreign debts have always been a constant burden and nightmare for the continent. The debts have reached \$313 billion. The real problem lies in the interest paid on these debts. These interests devour all the revenues of the African countries, which otherwise would have been spent on economic and social development of the continent.

To tackle this problem, a liaison team was formed of a number of African heads of states to hold talks on the matter with the debtor countries and organizations. But the debtor countries and organizations refuse to talk to the African countries collectively and prefer to deal with every African country individually.

The last African summit has decided that the collective liaison team should continue its efforts to find a comprehensive and collective solution for the problem of the debts. In my opinion, the best way to get rid of this burden of debts lies in making the debtor countries and organizations understand the true nature of the conditions in Africa and so agree to negotiate with the African countries collectively.

One appropriate and rational proposal we could have, in my opinion, is to shut the tap of interest due on the debts and to discuss granting Africa a period of grace of 10 to 15 years during which the interest would be frozen so that the African countries can catch their breath and concentrate on development.

As to the debts themselves, consideration should be given to writing them off entirely or in part and rescheduling them in a logical and flexible manner.

[Khalifah] What was the cause of the fears and differences that arose over the question of the mechanism for resolving conflicts in Africa?

[Salim] The mechanism for resolving conflicts has been put into operation since June 1993. But at the beginning it faced reservations from two countries. The first said that technically and physically the OAU cannot tackle conflicts, while the second expressed fears that the mechanism would open the door for interference in African affairs.

But if your question is meant to concentrate on the role of the last OAU summit, then I can say that there have been no such fears, inasmuch as there has been a misunderstanding or lack of integrated understanding of the nature of this mechanism.

The summit also made it possible to clarify matters to those who had raised some questions concerning the creation of an African military force for rapid intervention to resolve conflicts, as well as concerning the role of the United Nations and foreign initiatives. In this context, I wish to clarify some of the facts pertaining to the mechanism for resolving conflicts:

1. The mechanism was basically created to keep out foreign interference in African conflicts.
2. Never did Africa, and consequently the OAU, contemplate the creation of a permanent military force for peacekeeping or for rapid intervention, though there were efforts which the information media kept harping upon in this regard. But the OAU never raised this question at all.
3. The creation of an African peace fund to finance this mechanism was done on the basis that the OAU would annually contribute one fifth of its general budget to the fund, on condition that this contribution would never be less than \$1 million, and that the fund would accept voluntary contributions from the OAU member states as well as contributions and help from within the African continent.
4. Concentration within the mechanism would be on preemptive diplomacy, because we realize that the task of safeguarding peace in the whole world (including Africa) is the responsibility of the United Nations and the Security Council. However, in Africa there are special and emergency cases on which the OAU cannot stand with hands tied, such as the situation in Liberia, where the United Nations refused to intervene, and also the case of Rwanda, from which the United Nations withdrew its forces so that the OAU had to

provide forces from nine African countries to replace them, and they operated under the banners of the world organization. Somalia provides yet a third example.

All that the OAU had proposed with regard to the mechanism was that brigades would be trained within their respective African armies to be summoned when the need arises and would operate either under UN command or under OAU command in emergency cases. The OAU Peace Fund would contribute to covering the expenses of this mechanism, after we have accepted that it could receive logistic and material help from foreign countries such as the United States, the Western countries, and South Korea, but without any conditions being imposed on us in regard how to use what they offer.

I wish to affirm here that the contributions we have received for this fund from the foreign countries are much bigger than those received from the African countries. This is deplorable and should have been the other way round.

[Khalifah] The idea of collecting the OAU's dues from its member states has been successful and shrewd. It has accomplished some of its objectives. Will you continue to apply the principle of depriving the countries which are in arrears in the payment of their OAU dues of the right to participate in voting within the organization?

[Salim] The decision to impose sanctions against the countries which fail to pay their financial contributions to the organization for two successive years was taken at the 1990 summit conference when it was decided to grant the states with arrears a five-year period of grace to settle their arrears through rescheduling.

According to the terms of the period of grace, it was decided that sanctions would be imposed on the countries with arrears, thus preventing them from exercising their rights to speak, vote, participate in the OAU committees, and hold posts in it. Following the imposition of the sanctions on 1 June 1995, the volume of arrears dropped from \$64 million to only \$38 million. That was a healthy and significant indication. The OAU decided that the imposition of sanctions should take place in a comprehensive manner at the end of last month.

[Khalifah] Sharp differences appeared during the last OAU summit over the Palestine question and the Middle East peace process. What were the points of difference and how were they settled?

[Salim] We in the OAU try to reach our final resolutions through agreement. It is natural that there should be differences of views in an organization that comprises 53 members. The Palestine and Middle East questions have been on the OAU agenda for the past three

decades. We have always supported Palestinian rights. But this time it was necessary to take into consideration the new developments which have taken place within the framework of the peace process. Following some differences of opinion, we succeeded in reaching the resolution adopted by the OAU without division.

[Khalifah] During the convocation of the recent African summit, President Husni Mubarak's motorcade was the subject of an attempted attack in Addis Ababa. Did this incident shake your faith in the soundness of Ethiopia's performance in the field of security and prompt you consequently to think of moving the OAU headquarters to another African country deemed to be better equipped to house these headquarters?

[Salim] The abortive attempt on President Mubarak on 26 June in Addis Ababa was a criminal act, which the OAU denounced at the time. Though the incident was the first of its kind in the history of the OAU, it did not go so far as to leave a negative impression about Ethiopia's performance in matters of security. For similar phenomena have taken place in more than one place and more than one country and are being dealt with in terms of security according to their nature and circumstances. This was the case with the Ethiopian dimension.

As to the talk about transferring of the OAU headquarters from Ethiopia, it is nothing but balderdash. For this matter was not raised by any country directly or indirectly, formally or informally.

[Khalifah] Do you now feel the threat of terrorism to the security and safety of the entire African continent or to some parts of it? What means do you think necessary for confronting terrorism collectively?

[Salim] Our position toward violence and terrorism at both the continental and world levels has not changed, namely, that we denounce and condemn terrorism and violence. The terrorist attempt against President Mubarak provided the OAU summit with the opportunity to reiterate its condemnation of terrorism and to decide to confront it collectively, because terrorism and violence conflict with African tradition and custom and constitute a threat to peace and security in the world, including Africa. We are against terrorism and violence and believe in collective action to get rid of it once and for all.

[Khalifah] The situation in Somalia is deteriorating anew in terms of food as well as in terms of security. How does the OAU envisage the solution to the worsening Somalia problem?

[Salim] With regard to the situation in Somalia, which as you have said has been deteriorating in terms of

food and security alike, the solution we envisage lies in the hands of the Somalis themselves. We are ready and determined to help them reach a political solution, I repeat, a political solution. The tripartite mission formed by the OAU, consisting of the chairman of its current session President Meles Zenawi, former Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, and the OAU secretary general, will continue its contacts with all the Somali factions to achieve this political solution.

Until the formation of a Somali national unity authority through the establishment of a broad-based government acceptable to all parties, the Somali seat on the OAU will remain vacant. In the meantime, we will intensify our objective diplomatic preemptive efforts within this framework.

Burundi

5 Sentenced for Attempting To 'Demoralize' Army

EA2007180395 Bujumbura Radio-Television Nationale du Burundi Radio in French 1100 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The case nicknamed (Cognon) reached its conclusion with the Supreme Court verdict on 14 July. The court sentenced (Jean-Joseph Phelly Cognon), a Belgian national, to three years and four months in jail. The same court condemned Burundians Deo Ngendahayo to four years, Anatole Becanamwo to two years, Festus Ntanyungu to four years, and Jean Ngendanganya to four years of imprisonment.

The five culprits are accused of having tried to deliberately take part in an attempt to demoralize the Burundian Army in order to harm national defense. This was done during several meetings held at the Burundian Embassy in Brussels in June 1994. During the meetings, Jean Ngendanganya, then Burundian ambassador to Belgium, proposed that an infiltration and information mission be entrusted to consultant (Jean-Joseph Cognon) to inquire about the exact intentions of the Burundian opposition, and of the [Burundian] Army toward the leadership, the means at their disposal, and the external support they could count on to realize their objectives.

Consultant (Jean-Joseph Cognon) accepted the mission of coming to Burundi on food allowance, accommodation, and travel allowance, and inactivity allowance of 10,000 francs a day for 10 days at the Burundian State's expense.

One Attack Reported During Nationwide Exams

EA2007175295 Bujumbura Radio-Television Nationale du Burundi Radio in French 1100 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The day has come for standard six pupils. This morning they took the national examination which enables them to enter secondary and technical education. Our reporters travelled around the capital to witness the conditions in which the examinations were taking place. Didas Ndikumana reports:

[Begin Ndikumana recording] [Words indistinct] French, Kirundi, Maths, and Environmental Study were taken by Standard Six pupils. The examinations took place in Bujumbura in a peaceful atmosphere. [passage omitted] [end recording]

[Paris AFP in English at 1632 GMT on 20 July in a Bujumbura-dated item adds the following: "Suspected Hutu extremists fired on a convoy of examiners in Burundi's secondary school entrance examinations Thursday, and two attackers were shot dead by soldiers guarding the convoy, police said. The attack, which

took place after the examinations ended, occurred on the road from Bujumbura to Muramwya, 40 kilometres (25 miles) to the east.

["Military authorities had feared operations by Hutu extremists suspected of wishing to prevent the examination, which must take place on the same day throughout the country. They had delayed the exam by a day to allow special security measures, including placing the convoy under heavy armed guard.

["Police said the attack was carried out by a Hutu "armed gang" on a convoy of officials in charge of supervising the tests. The soldiers protecting the convoy shot two of the attackers and seized two machine guns.

["Schools have not been spared by the bloody inter-ethnic conflicts between a Hutu majority and Tutsi minority over the past two years. Observers said the fear of Hutu attacks had increased after Army operations to flush out Hutus from several areas, forcing them to flee, and prohibiting an unspecified number of Hutus from taking the examination."]

Rwanda

Government Denies Reported Troop Deployment

EA2007210295 Kigali Radio Rwanda in French 1800 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A Zairian broadcasting station recently reported that the Rwandan Government has deployed commandos in the Kivu region to kill Rwandan refugees there. Sources close to the presidency say the information is aimed at making refugees lose trust in the Rwandan Government in the framework of a long-term manipulation to discourage the voluntary return of the refugees. The Rwandan authorities also believe that such information is also geared to obfuscate the wrongdoings of the militia in the eastern Zairian region, and on the Rwandan-Zairian border.

The same Radio Goma reported two days ago [18 July] that the Interahamwe militias have massacred 75 Zairian peasants of the Bahunde tribe, who live in the Masisi region, eastern Zaire. We obtained the information from a reliable source close to the presidency.

French Paper Summarizes Intelligence Reports

BR1907141295 Paris LIBERATION in French 18 Jul 95 p 7

[Report by Stephen Smith: "Rwanda Under Close Scrutiny From Military Intelligence"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Kigali — There are only two buildings near the rotary at the top of this hill. The first

of these, which anyone may enter, contains the Rwandan Information Ministry on the first floor, which has the job of accrediting foreign journalists and disseminating official news bulletins both at home and abroad. The second floor is home to the Rwandan Information Office [ORINFOR], the propaganda machine of the old regime. This organ was formerly headed by Ferdinand Nahimana, the historian accused of having been "the Goebbels of genocide." Today, ORINFOR is led by a major [commandant], but its mission is unchanged: telling the government's media what to say. What is new about it? It is extending the tutelary concern for control to the point of asking for a copy of any dispatches sent out by local correspondents to press agencies around the world.

However, it is in the neighboring building that the sanctuary of information — of the regime in power — is located. Surrounded by an imposing concrete wall, with access possible only via one of the two red portals that are guarded day and night by special soldiers, this two-story building, flanked by annexes in the courtyard, houses the Department of Military Intelligence, or DMI, which channels information to the high command of the Rwandan Army and the Rwandan Defense Ministry. With this dual role the most confidential reports are sent to General Paul Kagame, head of the Rwandan Patriotic Army, Rwandan defense minister, and vice president of the Republic — in a word, the strongman of the new regime.

LIBERATION was granted access to some DMI reports (written in English, not in Kinyarwanda, the national language) which revealed four main areas of attention: enemies located outside the country; enemies within the country; the UN Mission in Rwanda and nongovernmental organizations [NGO's]; and finally the Rwandan Army itself. There is nothing surprising about the attention devoted to subversive machinations abroad: Ever since something like 2 million Hutus, including 35,000 troops from the government army and most of the Interahamwe militiamen of the old regime, fled the country last year, Rwanda has been encircled by hostile forces in Tanzania, Burundi, and Zaire. This existential threat is responsible for a growing paranoiac state of mind.

Apart from the training camps already mentioned in the world press, the DMI has identified sites in Karemi, southern Kivu, and also in Zaire, on a farm in Ngezayo. In one report written by a captain in the intelligence services, dated 28 February, Nyungwe in northern Burundi, and two points of entry into Zaire, Bukavu and Kibumba, are portrayed as "attack routes" that would be taken by the exiled forces of the old regime in an attempt to regain control of the country. Apart from France, South Africa, and China, the DMI also suspects Iraq

and Japan of supplying them with arms. Finally, one summary report mentioned "growing exasperation" in Benaco, the main camp in Tanzania, where the refugees are reported to feel abandoned by their "intellectuals," employed by the humanitarian organizations and by the militiamen who "made a fortune through commercial activities" using money taken out of the country.

The DMI also displays a sustained interest in the "enemy within," identified in one colonel's report dated 19 January as being "opposition politicians, in particular those belonging to the Rwandan Democratic Movement [MDR] and, of course, other extremist forces." That remark has a certain degree of wit, for the MDR — the main (Hutu) opposition party under the old regime — has been part of the so-called "government of national unity" ever since the Rwandan Patriotic Front [FPR] came to power last summer. Indeed, its very own leader, Faustin Twagiramungu, heads this government coalition. Well, apparently he does so without the confidence of the DMI: For together with the Rwandan ambassadors to Canada and Switzerland, the first secretary in Kinshasa, and the staff manager at the Information Ministry, he stands accused of "conspiracy." The same applies to Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe, vice prime minister and civil service minister, to Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga, and Finance Minister Marc Rugenera. Both of the former are high-ranking officials in the FPR, the only thing these people have in common is that all three are Hutus.

In the DMI reports, the "suspected activities" of the UN contingent and the various NGO's are listed in a wealth of detail. For instance, it is revealed not only that Doctors Without Borders "employs French soldiers," but also that one of its members — a logistics chief — fired a certain Celestin Rwayitame who is believed to have close links with the FPR. The NGO Terre des Hommes is also pinpointed by the DMI's agents who, among others, reproach "Jules and Alexa" from Nyungwe orphanage in Burundi for not "encouraging" the Hutu refugees to return. Finally, the United Nations is repeatedly accused of hiding Interahamwe militiamen, shielding "perpetrators of genocide" from justice, and "transporting arms." In the DMI reports, the image of the Blue Helmets is that of a naive occupation force, if not one hostile to the new regime.

Questions are also raised about the Catholic Church, the priest Andre Sibomana, and "conspiratorial meetings" in the parish of Sainte-Famille [Holy Family] in Kigali. Nonetheless, these reports lack specific details. The logical conclusion from which would be that there are difficulties involved in "penetrating" ecclesiastical circles. On the other hand, the DMI is naturally very much on the ball regarding life within the Rwandan

Army. In several reports the reader's attention is drawn to "growing indiscipline and cases of insubordination." One colonel's report, dated 19 January, even analyzes the motives for "numerous desertions." In his view, a large number of soldiers originally from Burundi, or those from Rwanda who joined the movement at a late stage, are abandoning their post to "return to school," "look for another job," or swell the ranks of the Tutsi militiamen commanded by Colonel Bagaza, the former dictator in Burundi who, in his quest to return to power, is fuelling the agitation in the neighboring country.

Zaire

French Envoy Summoned Over Expulsions

AB2007190095 Paris AFP in French
1438 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Kinshasa, 20 Jul (AFP) — Lunda Bululu, the Zairian minister of foreign affairs,

today summoned Jacques Depaigne, the French ambassador to Kinshasa, to protest against the conditions in which 43 Zairians living illegally in Europe were expelled, a reliable source disclosed. According to the same source, Lunda Bululu, did not, in fact, protest the expulsions "per se" but regretted the "form and conditions" in which they were made.

The 43 Zairians, who were expelled from Europe — 36 from France, three from Belgium, three from the Netherlands, and one from Germany — arrived in Kinshasa yesterday morning aboard the French airline company, Air Charter.

Various French and Zairian associations for the defense of human rights have already protested the "inhuman" conditions in which these people were embarked on the flight that returned them to Zaire. Some of them, according to pictures shown on French television, were bound with plastic cords.

Iranian Oil Deal Does Not 'Break' U.S. Sanctions

*MB2007191495 Johannesburg SABC TV 1 Network
in English 1800 GMT 20 Jul 95*

[FBIS Transcribed Text] An American trade embargo on Iranian oil is forcing that country to seek other outlets and South Africa is set to receive an unexpected financial windfall as a result. A secret deal on the verge of being concluded between South Africa and Iran involves the use of strategic oil storage facilities at Saldanha Bay. Charl Pauw and cameraman Brian Yurinovsky report the deal has been under wraps for almost a year.

[Begin recording] [Pauw] The massive oil storage facility at Saldanha has been a highly secret installation for 11 years and has only been commercialized recently. South Africa's strategic crude oil stocks were stored here during the boycott years. The facility has six semi-underground concrete tanks which can store a total of 45 million barrels of oil, equivalent to the cargo of at least 30 supertankers. It's very difficult to imagine that the tops of these tanks cover 66 rugby fields. Everything below it is brimful with oil, up to the full depth of a 10-story building. The National Iranian Oil Corporation is shortly to enter into a joint venture with South Africa's Strategic Oil Fund for the use of two of the six tanks. Mr. Kobus van Zyl, general manager of the SSF [expansion unknown], says the deal offers substantial profits for South Africa.

[Van Zyl] We plan to store Iranian crude in Saldanha and to form a joint venture with Iranian Trading Company to trade the oil out of Saldanha.

[Pauw] The United States has a trade boycott against Iran. Does your deal not fly in the face of that agreement?

[Van Zyl] I don't think so. The sanctions of America is against American companies and subsidiaries of American companies doing business with Iran. This deal is not intended to break that sanctions.

[Pauw] Could you give me some insight into the international politics which has made it necessary for the Iranians to seek facilities here in South Africa?

[Van Zyl] The Iranians naturally lost customers after the introduction of the American sanctions. They will most likely have crude oil cargoes available for which they don't have customers and in view of that there may be a need for them to use extra storage facilities.

[Pauw] Mr. Van Zyl also said it would be possible to decrease South Africa's strategic oil stock by 15 million barrels, releasing the 750 million rands for use elsewhere. The deal could cut back on South Africa's

unfavorable trade balance of five and a half billion rands a year with Iran. Shipping traffic to Saldanha Bay will increase threefold. It will go up from 25 oil tankers a year to 75. There were six ships in the bay when we flew over. A small oil tanker was offloading at the oil facility which is installed at the end of the quay from which iron ore is exported. The oil installation was classified until recently but has handled 450 cargoes of crude oil from ships which entered the port with secret code numbers. The harbor will have to be improved to handle increased traffic. Shipping channels are to be deepened and the oil berth doubled up. The Strategic Oil Fund is aware of the pollution danger from the world's aging tanker fleet and is placing a 21 million rand oil pollution contingency plan into operation. [end recording]

Deputy President Denies Cabinet Reshuffle

*MB2007161095 Johannesburg FINANCE WEEK
in English 13-19 Jul 95 pp 4, 5*

[Report on interview with Deputy President Thabo Mbeki by Charlene Smith; place and date not given]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Deputy president Thabo Mbeki has criticised pervasive rumours that a cabinet shake-up is due and that he wants four senior government members — Jay Naidoo, Mac Maharaj, Ronnie Kasrils and Pallo Jordan — to get the chop.

"Those rumours are the product of either an idle mind or an evil mind," Mbeki told FW [FINANCE WEEK] this week.

Talk in parliament and among some key business leaders is that Naidoo is blocking blacks from top Reconstruction & Development Programme [RDP] posts. However, Naidoo points out that six of the 12 senior positions in the RDP office are held by blacks.

And among staff seconded from major organisations such as Eskom [Electricity Supply Commission], the CSIR [Council for Scientific and Industrial Research], IBM, Unicef and Telkom [Telecommunications Corporation] three are white, four black and two coloured. Naidoo also points out that the RDP office is not the only RDP delivery department — "that is the collective responsibility of government as a whole".

Naidoo says there has been no discussion of the RDP office falling under Mbeki either in cabinet, the ANC or directly. Mbeki denies that he wants this, against the claims of some media.

Mbeki says rumours appear to have started about six weeks ago after the European Union expressed concern to him about the slow progress of some government departments. There were no complaints, he says, about

Naidoo's office but there were suggestions that some loan money might have to be repatriated if not spent in a certain time frame.

Mbeki called in Naidoo, Finance Minister Chris Liebenberg, Education Minister Sibusiso Bhengu, Public Works Minister Jeff Radebe, Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom, Agriculture Minister Kraai van Niekerk and Provincial Affairs Minister Roelf Meyer to ensure the process was hastened.

"It was not the RDP office falling behind, it was some ministries," Mbeki says.

Clearly concerned at perceptions that he is not above double dealing, politically, to further his presidential aims, Mbeki lamented not only "poor media reporting" that failed to check facts, but pervasive rumour-mongering.

In a two-hour meeting with FW Mbeki said there was no cabinet reshuffle planned: "The President will make that decision and he has given no indication he will. In my view it would be incorrect to carry out a reshuffle now. All of us are very new in our posts and many are still finding their feet."

Mbeki noted: "This is not Britain with an established bureaucracy that can have a reshuffle after 14 months. We are undergoing fundamental change here, and to change ministers is not something that can be done lightly."

Some sources in non-governmental organisations claim Mbeki is creating an African elite around him to foster his presidential ambitions and is opposed to Naidoo and Maharaj because they are Indian.

They claim, too, that Mbeki is isolating whites from meaningful positions.

However, although Mbeki's advisory committee is all black, his public relations officer, Ricky Naidoo, is Indian, and two close friends who worked with him in the pre-election ANC foreign affairs department are Yusuf "Jojo" Saloojee and present deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad. The two, Pahad in particular, remain personal friends.

More importantly, though, Mbeki is drawing men and women around him who have strong grassroots constituencies and knowledge, whether church leaders or business people such as Kagiso Trust's Eric Molobi, Sam Shilowa (COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions]) and Charles Ngqakulu (SACP [South African Communist Party]), in their private capacities. Seth Phalatsi of BMW and other black leaders from business and academia are also close to Mbeki.

He comments: "I can't get a wide enough range of opinions myself by knocking on doors, so I look for people with different outreaches and ask for their frank opinions."

Mbeki is close to Defence Minister Joe Modise. One report doing the political rounds was that Mbeki and Modise wanted to sack Ronnie Kasrils, deputy Minister of Defence, for allegedly botching the purchase of corvettes to patrol SA's [South Africa] coastline.

However, Mbeki affirms this was never a consideration. Problems around the purchase of the corvettes, he argues, were inherited from the previous administration. "We found ourselves having to re-examine why we wanted them, and if we wanted them," Mbeki says.

Outspoken Pallo Jordan is often seen as a thorn in the side of Mbeki because not only is Jordan averse to power games and to falling into line behind individuals, but also because he controls the SA Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Some analysts aver Mbeki wants a more sympathetic minister to him in that position. Neither Jordan nor his press officer Muff Anderson were available for comment.

But Mbeki, although admitting that he was concerned about what he regards as the poor state of journalism in SA, said Jordan has just issued a green paper on broadcasting and thus seems to be coming to terms with his portfolio.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, who is close to Jordan, is, according to Mbeki, working a difficult portfolio that has many remnants of the previous administration that are difficult to manage.

Mbeki rejected claims that he was opposed to Maharaj because he is Indian and is a close ally of Mbeki's primary rival for the presidency, Cyril Ramaphosa. It was Maharaj who ensured Ramaphosa won the position of secretary-general of the ANC after fervent last-minute caucusing at the ANC conference in 1991. This saw Maharaj bring the weight of the SA Communist Party to support Ramaphosa's nomination.

While Mbeki has been active in building a constituency and visiting regions and interest groups, Ramaphosa's profile has dwindled to a fraction of what it was as chairman of the Constitutional Assembly (CA). Even the CA has been less than successful in its aim of canvassing broad support among voters, or of selling its message.

Ramaphosa's role as ANC secretary-general has also been very low-key. He is presently abroad and was unavailable for comment. The other top contender for the presidency, however, is Gauteng Premier Tokyo

Sexwale. He and Mbeki made news a while ago after it was claimed Mbeki asked SABC-TV to limit Sexwale's airtime. Both subsequently denied the allegation and any rift.

Mbeki rejected claims he was fighting for the presidency, saying: "If you find any two people that claim that, tell them you have an agreement with me for them to come with you and tell me what leads them to that conclusion. Because the same as with other allegations levelled against me, such as lateness, once you ask the rumours to discredit him, or if it was merely a factor of poor journalism.

He commented: "I've been told that the average experience of a journalist in a newsroom is 18 months. No wonder news gathering and writing is not what it should be. Too often people print allegations about me without asking my side of the story."

Mbeki said, too, that he believed hostility to the apartheid government had transformed into hostility toward the ANC government. "We want a critical posture, yes, but not mindless hostility."

Islamic Party: U.S. Reluctant To Stop Serbs

MB1907191995 Johannesburg SABC TV 1 Network in Afrikaans 1800 GMT 19 Jul 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Bosnian Serbs have warned that they will act against any foreign attempt to protect Muslim enclaves. [passage omitted]

In South Africa the chairman of the Islamic Party (Hassan Freddy) says that U.S. reluctance to act against Serb aggression in Bosnia clearly indicates anti-Muslim prejudice. He says the UN's inability to stop these atrocities is another example of the global onslaught against Muslims. [passage omitted]

Gauteng's Duarte on 'Biggest Ever' Anticrime Effort

MB2107110095 Johannesburg SAPA in English 0918 GMT 21 Jul 95

[FBIS Transcribed text] Johannesburg July 21 SAPA — Gauteng's biggest ever anti-crime operation, with a long-term strategy involving roadblocks and house-to-house searches for illegal weapons, was announced by Safety and Security MEC [member of the Executive Council] Jesse Duarte on Friday [21 July].

Searches and roadblocks may inconvenience the public, but were necessary to beat criminals in an area with one of the world's highest crime rates, Duarte told a media conference with Gauteng Commissioner Lt-Gen Sharma Maharaj. "If we are really serious about crime we are going to have to disturb a great number of people," she

said, calling for public support as the province mounts its operation under the national community safety plan.

A special unit would be deployed to track down known gangsters and bail-jumpers, and to examine past criminal cases. And all branches of the firearm unit would combine to scour the province for illegal weapons. This would include cordoning off suburbs and conducting house-to-house searches. Police at roadblocks would join the search for stolen cars, and try to stop hijacked vehicles leaving Gauteng. Part of the plan involves apprehending people receiving stolen cars and forging licence papers.

Investigative units and under-cover police would target crime syndicates. Duarte said she would support police attempts to have bail refused for people involved in taxi violence, and for criminals who may intimidate witnesses.

Police and traffic officers would be put on patrol along major taxi routes. Visible policing remained the province's best deterrent against crime, which Duarte said was high in Gauteng due to 40 percent unemployment, an abundance of illegal guns, well-organised communications and an efficient banking system which attracted syndicates.

Maharaj said the new plan was the biggest anti-crime operation ever mounted in Gauteng. "It is time we started action," Duarte said, noting that earlier delays in visible community policing stemmed from the need to consult with non-government organisations and civics.

Communities now supported the police, with most organisations ready to back harsh measures against crime and criminals, she said. She asked the public to respond patiently to road blocks and car searches. "We need a patriotic and united front against criminals."

Cocaine Problem 'Getting Out of Control'

MB2007112295 Johannesburg SAPA in English 0948 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Johannesburg July 20 SAPA — South Africa's cocaine problem is rapidly getting out of control, medical director of Phoenix House, Dr Sylvain de Miranda said on Thursday [20 July]. "Four years ago if we saw one case of cocaine addiction every few months it was a lot. Last weekend alone 16 people called in needing help," he said.

No figures on the number of people being treated for cocaine addiction are available, but it is considerable, according to de Miranda.

While drug usage is on the increase, organisations trying to combat the problem are facing a cash crisis.

"Funding is a disaster," said de Miranda. "While the government says that combating drugs is a priority, in the same breath they cut our subsidies by a third."

Cocaine's popularity amongst higher income groups has resulted in an increase in white collar crime such as fraud, while in lower income groups violence is on the increase. "Crack is being more widely used and can make people extremely violent — we have seen a number of completely inappropriate aggressive acts by people who have smoked it," said de Miranda.

The price of cocaine has fallen dramatically since it first appeared on the streets about four years ago. At that stage it cost R300 [rands] a gram. Now it is possible to purchase "fairly good quality" cocaine for R150 a gram.

De Miranda said that judging by the high quality of cocaine seized at the point of entry to South Africa, it must emanate from its point of manufacture — probably Columbia — although it may be diverted to another country first. He said almost 80 percent of the known cocaine trade in South Africa is being conducted by Nigerians.

"If the situation remains unchecked the implications for the country could be disastrous," de Miranda concluded.

Government Considers Importing Medicines From Cuba

MB2007133195 *Johannesburg BEELD in Afrikaans*
12 Jul 95 p 2

[FBIS Translated Text] The government is investigating the possibility of importing medicines from Cuba instead of from the United States, as part of an effort to support the Cuban economy. This has been announced by ANC Deputy Secretary General Cheryl Carolus.

Anglovaal Discovers 'Large' Nickel Deposit

MB1907122695 *Johannesburg THE STAR in English*
19 Jul 95 p 14

[Report by Derek Tommey]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A large nickel deposit — which could result in the establishment of a mining operation amounting to more than R1 billion [rands] — has been found in the Eastern Transvaal, Gerry Robbertze, the senior consulting engineer of Anglovaal Minerals, said last night.

Addressing a news conference on Anglovaal's quarterly results, Robbertze said a mineralised band known as the Uitkomst complex, containing nickel, copper, cobalt and smaller quantities of precious metals including traces

of gold, had been located on the farms Uitkomst and Slaaihoek, southeast of Waterval Boven.

Much of the exploration was carried out by Anglovaal on its farm Slaaihoek. From the beginning of the month Anglo American became a partner with Anglovaal to form the Nkomati Nickel Venture, in which it would have a 25 percent interest, in exchange for contributing its mineral rights on the farm Uitkomst.

Anglo American would not contribute any money to the project until a decision to go ahead was taken. An exploration shaft had been sunk and a pilot plant erected. It was proposed to treat about 6,500 [metric] tons of ore in the pilot plant to evaluate the ore zones and this would be followed by detailed smelting and refining test-work.

Anglovaal is expected to be able to take a decision on whether to proceed with a mine and a smelter next year or 1997. The cost of the smelter would be about R1.0 billion [rands], said Robbertze.

Anglovaal was going ahead with developing its Forzando coal deposit in the Eastern Transvaal, which sits astride the railway line to Richards Bay. He said the coal was high grade and the workings were at shallow depth. The first coal would be produced next year at a rate of 600,000 tons a year.

A decision would then be taken about whether to expand to 2- million tons a year. This expansion would cost R400 million but would be partly financed out of revenue.

Helped by a significantly higher gold price, total profit after tax for the gold mines in the Anglovaal Minerals group rose R4.9- million to R42.2 million in the June quarter.

Total gold production rose from 8,857kg to 8,948kg, while the average revenue for the quarter rose from R43,432 to R45,380 a kilogramme, said Rob Wilson, the managing director of Anglovaal Minerals.

Hartebeestfontein's profit after tax for the quarter was virtually unchanged from R34.1 million to R34.2 million, with the benefits of the higher gold price offset to some extent by increased working costs, higher taxation and lower throughput as a result of the additional holidays.

Tim Spindler, the general manager of mining operations, reported a deterioration in industrial relations at Hartebeestfontein. This situation could be linked to the wage negotiations now taking place, he said. The mine had experienced sit-downs, minor go slows, full- scale go-slows and miners refusing to go to work.

If the situation continued it would seriously affect Hartbeestfontein's results this quarter, Spindler warned. Hartbeestfontein's earnings for the 12 months ended June amounted to R153.5 million, down from R217.1 million in the previous 12 months.

South African Press Review for 20 Jul

MB2007132595

[FBIS Editorial Report]

THE STAR

Free RDP From Centralized Control — The Reconstruction and Development Plan, RDP, "should be freed from centralised bureaucratic control if it is to contribute to real democracy in South Africa," says a page-18 editorial in Johannesburg THE STAR in English on 20 July. In many instances funds from the RDP "are being put to excellent use," however, "we should listen carefully to criticism of the RDP now being voiced by various communities." The South African National Civic Organization says that to achieve effective delivery of the RDP "decisions must be made at community level" since at the moment the perception of ordinary people is that "not much is happening at all, and that the new South Africa is not markedly different from the old." If the calls for the introduction of "direct democracy" in South Africa are ignored "much more than the RDP will be discredited." The very establishment of local government structures will "be ineffective unless the millions of hitherto voiceless people feel that they have been empowered."

BUSINESS DAY

Decision on Privatization — The issue of privatization has "languished" in the hands of the Public Enterprises Ministry committee "far longer than necessary" with the ANC faction of the Government of National Unity "apparently afraid of bringing it out into the open again in the face of apparent opposition from COSATU

[Congress of South African Trade Unions] and the SA [South African] Communist Party," says a page-14 editorial in Johannesburg BUSINESS DAY in English on 20 July. It is time for "rigorous public debate" on privatization but "there is no need to reinvent the wheel." "The world is saturated with a variety of approaches implemented over the past 15 years." A decision "cannot be further delayed."

THE CITIZEN

Police Drawn Into Political Disputes — National Police Commissioner George Fivaz is "not alone in being harassed" according to the page-6 editorial in Johannesburg THE CITIZEN in English on 19 July. He has come "under pressure" from Advocate Jan Munnik who alleged he had been denied access to case documents. Fivaz accused Munnik of "'lynch-mob tactics'." Fivaz has also found himself having to "defend the police against allegations they had been involved in dirty tricks." THE CITIZEN believes "there is a great danger of drawing the police, including commissioners, into political disputes to the point where they have to concentrate on warding off attacks when they should be dealing strictly with police matters."

CAPE TIMES

ANC Inability To Control 'Differing Voices' — "There are so many differing voices in the ANC that confusion could easily arise were the party to be slow in correcting those out of line with official policy and principles," begins a page-6 editorial in Cape Town CAPE TIMES in English on 13 July. Fortunately the ANC head office stepped in quickly when the KwaZulu/Natal branch "suggested that Nuremberg-style trials and even capital punishment be instituted for 'apartheid criminals' who did not come clean on past misdeeds." CAPE TIMES finds it "difficult to tell what is doing the wagging, the tail or the dog, the ANC's frequent inability to control its disparate parts must be held to blame."

Liberia

Peace Talks Continue Despite NPFL Absence

AB2007192495 Paris AFP in English
1852 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] Monrovia, 20 Jul (AFP) — A key mediator at reconvened peace talks in devastated Liberia said Thursday [20 July] "all efforts" were being made to get warlord Charles Taylor's faction back to the conference table. Ghana's Deputy Foreign Minister Mohamed Chambas told a press briefing that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was doing everything possible to get the National Patriotic Front (NPFL) to return after a walkout Wednesday and ideally persuade its leader to attend in person.

"We are in contact with them and we will do everything to bring the NPFL delegates back to the conference," Chambas said. Four Taylor aides walked out after the meeting began Wednesday at the Unity Conference Center, 11 kilometres (seven miles) from the city centre, blaming alleged "irregularities".

ECOWAS also wants Alhaji Koromah, who leads the ethnic Mandingo wing of the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO), to personally attend the Monrovia meeting, the minister added. Koromah's faction is being represented by the warlord's brother, Lansana Koromah. Five other faction leaders have all turned up.

Ghana currently holds the chairmanship of ECOWAS, which dispatched the African peacekeeping force ECOMOG to Liberia in August 1990 in an early bid to stop the carnage.

Talks continued Thursday behind closed doors, despite the absence of the NPFL delegation. However, observers doubt any peace agreement can work without the faction's support, as it still controls large parts of the West African country from its headquarters at Gbarnga, 160 kilometres (100 miles) northeast of Monrovia. [passage omitted]

Nigeria

Commentary on Western Allies' Human Rights Claims

AB2007224895 Kaduna Radio Nigeria in English
1700 GMT 20 Jul 95

[Commentary by Ismael Hamed Dabai]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In recent [as heard], the United States and its Western allies have stepped up campaigns against Nigeria on democracy and human rights. Ironically, the U.S. and its allies, especially Britain and France, are doing so while encouraging

antidemocratic regimes that perpetuate antihuman rights elsewhere.

There are indeed many examples to prove this. Take the case of the coup in Qatar in which a son of the former king announced the overthrow of his father who was then away on official visit. The U.S. and its allies immediately declared their support for the coup. It is also important to note at this juncture that the relationship between the U.S. and its allies, and that of the Arab countries in the Middle East is very cordial, despite the fact that almost all of them are not democratic as the West will claim to want. Most of them are monarchal where a parent's leadership position is hereditary. The U.S. and its allies went even to the extent of waging war to liberate one of them, Kuwait, which was having problems from its neighbor, Iraq.

Talking about Iraq, it reminds me of the double standards of the U.S. and its allies on human rights grounds. It can be recalled that the U.S. and its allies helped Iraq to wage a nine-year-old war against its Muslim neighbor, Iran. Many people were killed and resources wasted as a result of that war. The U.S. also turned deaf ears to the activities of the tyrannic Saddam Husayn who at that time used biological weapons to quell a rebellion in (Alachia) against his fellow countrymen. It was only when Saddam threatened the accessibility of cheap oil which the U.S. and its allies enjoy in the Middle East when he annexed Kuwait that they fought back.

Boris Yeltsin, the president of Russia, still has the full support of the U.S. and its allies, despite all his antidemocratic activities. He was so dictatorial and antidemocratic that he expelled a parliament voted into office through democratic process. Even now, when his forces are busy bombarding Chechnya, he has had little opposition from the West.

Coming back to Africa, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire had the support of the West from the beginning of his administration up to the time the West recognized the need to nurse another stooge in that country, when they realized how unpopular Mobutu is becoming. Mobutu enjoyed their support even though he assumed office through a military coup and perpetuated a lot of antihuman rights activities, especially on those who opposed him. Instead of the West to pressurize him out of office, they exploited the country's economy through him, and helped Mobutu to invest what he looted from the treasury in that country.

Another example here in Africa where the hypocrisy of the West is very glaring is Algeria. While the West was against the annulment of the so-called 12 June election in Nigeria, it encouraged the annulment of another election in Algeria which was believed to be

won by the Islamic Salvation Front. The military-backed government in that country is enjoying the support of the West despite its continued dehumanization of especially the leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front and so-called fundamentalists.

Israel is also a pet to the West and the U.S. in particular, despite its endless (?slaying) of the Palestinians and occupation of their land.

It is therefore evidently clear that the United States and its allies are not honest in their crusade for democracy and human rights. It is also imperative for them to understand that they are not in a position to determine the yardstick for democracy and human rights in Nigeria, and anywhere in the world. Nigeria as an independent nation recognized by the United Nations Organization has the right to decide for herself what is best for her.

Chad's Deby Meets Abacha on Lake Chad Conflict

AB2107094095 Lagos Radio Nigeria Network in English 0600 GMT 21 Jul 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Talks between Nigeria and Chad have ended in Abuja. The head of state, General Sani Abacha, led Nigeria's team to the talks, while President Idriss Deby of Chad was at the head of his country's delegation. State House correspondent Oji Ogbonia Oji reports:

[Begin Oji recording] The meeting discussed the report of the ministerial committee set up by the two countries, which conferred in Maiduguri recently on general bilateral matters aimed at enhancing economic and social cooperation between Nigeria and Chad. Addressing the opening session of the talks, the head of state, Gen. Sani Abacha, underscored the importance of the [words indistinct] of social and economic prosperity between Nigeria and Chad, in the interest of the citizens of the two countries. Gen. Abacha called for a peaceful approach to all areas of conflict between Nigeria and Chad and, indeed, the need for dialogue in all cases capable of causing creating disaffection among ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] member states.

Shortly after Gen. Abacha's speech, President Idriss Deby of Chad expressed concern on the increasing level of criminal activities in the Lake Chad Basin region. President Deby called for measures to check the problem. The Chadian leader said Nigeria's intervention was crucial in resolving all problems in the Chad Basin. President Deby ascertained that, as a result of the activities of the rebels, economic activity within the Chad Basin has reduced and most inhabitants of the Basin have also been displaced, resulting in consequent

loss of revenue. He commended Nigeria's role in the ECOWAS subregion and the initiatives by Nigerians at the recent meeting of the ministerial committee held in Maiduguri. The meeting, which took place at the inner chambers of the Presidential Villa, lasted over three hours. [end recording]

Six Human Rights Activists Reportedly Arrested

AB2007192295 Paris AFP in English 1900 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Lagos, 20 Jul (AFP) — Six human rights activists have been arrested in several parts of Nigeria in the past week, a human rights organisation said Thursday [20 July] in a statement. The activists were arrested in Lagos, Edo and Delta States, in the southwest of Nigeria, the region where human rights groups operate the most, the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) said. No official reasons have yet been given for the arrests, the group added. Officials would not confirm the report.

Oil Marketers Allegedly Against Price Increases

AB2107113395 Lagos NTA Television Network in English 2000 GMT 20 Jul 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Marketers of refined petroleum products say they are not advocating an increase in prices of petroleum products, but want a sufficient profit margin of about 15 percent to enable them operate efficiently. The managing director and chief executive of National Oil and Chemical Marketing, PLC, Mr. Sylvanus Okole, explained marketers standpoint in Lagos today at the company's pre-AGM [Annual General Meeting] press conference. energy correspondent Antonia Amusu reports:

[Begin recording] [Amusu] Mr. Sylvanus Okole explained that the situation, where marketers operate with less than 15 percent profit margin, does not allow for meaningful investment in the sector.

[Okole] Yes, the moment we get more than 15 percent, they get more into their bank account. But we in National Oil, we will be able to regenerate the assets, we will be able to put in modern assets, safe assets, the assets that this country should be proud of. So, when we get beyond the 15 percent, then we will begin to say now, let us invest in other areas that will assist the economy. We will look around, like I talked about farming.

[Amusu] The managing director, however, announced that, despite the uncondusive environment, National Oil and Chemical Marketing PLC led all other marketers for the second year running, using the volume, market

share, and net income after tax indices. [sentence as heard] These results, Mr. Okole said, though the best so far in the history of industry, can still be improved upon, because National Oil has the potential to do better if the conditions to operate are adequately addressed.

The chief executive decried the practice of selective deregulation, whereby the provision of facilities is deregulated, while the source of providing the facilities to operate profitably is regulated, an equation which, he says, is not balanced. Mr. Okole then called for either a free system or total regulation:

[Okole] We would like to continue to meet shareholders' aspirations. Our company has had to focus our efforts on activities that generate premium margins and we, therefore, have had to focus on lubricants, aviation [fuel], and chemicals when the markets are substantially deregulated. The results of these sectors are pointers to what deregulation through competition can achieve in returns, and the multiplying effect on the Nigerian economy. [end recording]

Sierra Leone

'Executive Outcomes' Commander: War 'Nearly Over'

AB2007140595 Paris AFP in English
1330 GMT 20 Jul 95

[By Rod MacJohnson]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Freetown, July 20 (AFP) — A commander for a South African-based security firm providing military advice to government forces in war-torn Sierra Leone predicted Thursday [20 July] that the four-year conflict was nearly over.

Operations commander Colonel Rudolf van Heerden told AFP in an interview that the West African country "will soon be stable and time is running out for rebel leader Foday Sankoh."

Around 150 war veterans working for the firm Executive Outcomes are here providing advice and training to the Sierra Leone Army. Since their arrival in May the Army has claimed a series of spectacular victories against the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), particularly around the second city Bo, 170 kilometres (105 miles) east of the capital.

Observers have put these successes down to intense training provided by the South African firm. The army claims 500 rebels have been killed this month. The

RUF's numbers are widely estimated at under 2,000 fighters, implying a severe blow for the rebel movement.

Speaking at a hotel at Freetown's exclusive Lumley Beach, the Namibian-born officer described his men as "professional soldiers who have lived and grown up through war for over 20 years."

"I personally advised the Angolan Army on how to recapture their diamond fields," van Heerden said.

Most of his men had come from three battalions of the South African Defence Force (SADF), he said, denying they were either "mercenaries", a "destabilising force" or directly involved in the fighting.

"We only give military advice and we carry guns only to defend ourselves. We are a conventional army and we specialise in counter insurgency, guerrilla warfare, overt and covert operations," he said.

The colonel refused to comment on who was paying the bill for his group to be in Sierra Leone. They replaced a contingent of ex-British Army Nepalese Gurkhas, who were employed through a British security firm to provide training in jungle warfare.

"We want to help African countries to neutralise their rebel wars. Africa should not depend on the United Nations to solve their security problems. Africans must solve their problems themselves as the continent is being destabilised by rebel wars and external influences," van Heerden said.

Meanwhile, the defence department in Freetown Thursday appealed to displaced people from the diamond-rich Kono district around Koidu, 250 kilometres (155 miles) east of the capital, not to return to the area until further notice.

The economically vital area, which produces two-thirds of Sierra Leone's diamonds, was over-run by the RUF in May before being recaptured by government forces late last month.

"The army is putting finishing touches to ensure the complete safety of the district so we cannot advise civilians to return just yet," the statement said.

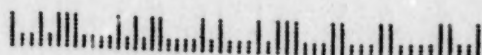
The war began in late March 1991 in the extreme southeast of the poverty-stricken country, 15 months after neighbouring Liberia plunged into anarchy. Around 10,000 have been killed in the fighting, according to official figures.

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